

During a Winter Storm

When a Winter Storm WATCH Is Issued:

- Listen to a NOAA Weather Radio and local radio and TV stations for further updates.
- Be alert to changing weather conditions.
- Avoid unnecessary travel.

When a Winter Storm WARNING Is Issued:

- Stay indoors during the storm.
- If you must go outside, several layers of lightweight clothing will keep you warmer than a single heavy coat. Gloves (or mittens) and a hat will prevent loss of body heat. Cover your mouth to protect your lungs.
- Walk carefully on snowy and icy sidewalks.
- After the storm, if you shovel snow, be extremely careful. It is physically strenuous work, so take frequent breaks. Avoid overexertion because heart attacks are a common cause of death during and after winter storms.

If Caught Outside During Blizzard Conditions:

- Seek shelter immediately. If no shelter is nearby, prepare a lean-to, windbreak, or snow cave for protection from the wind.
- Cover all exposed parts of the body.
- Build a fire for heat and to attract attention.
- Do not eat snow as it will lower your body temperature. You must melt it first.
- Do not walk looking for help unless visibility is within 100 feet; it is too easy to become disoriented in a storm.

Watch for these Following Winter Storm-related Medical Conditions:

Frostbite and Hypothermia

- Frostbite is a severe reaction to cold exposure that can permanently damage its victims. A loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance in fingers, toes, nose, or ear lobes are symptoms of frostbite.
- Hypothermia is a condition brought on when the body temperature drops to less than 90 degrees Fahrenheit. Symptoms of hypothermia include uncontrollable shivering, slow speech, memory lapses, frequent stumbling, drowsiness, and exhaustion.
- If frostbite or hypothermia is suspected, begin warming the person slowly and seek immediate medical assistance. Warm the person's trunk first. Use your own body heat to help. Arms and legs should be warmed last because stimulation of the limbs can drive cold blood to the heart and lead to heart failure.
- Put person in dry clothing and wrap his or her entire body in a blanket.
- Never give a frostbite or hypothermia victim something with caffeine in it (like coffee or tea) or alcohol. Caffeine, a stimulant, can cause the heart to beat faster and hasten the effects the cold has on the body. Alcohol, a depressant, can slow the heart and also hasten the ill effects of cold body temperatures.

Overexertion

- Heart attacks from shoveling heavy snow are a leading cause of deaths during winter. Pushing a car or walking in deep snow can also cause overexertion.

Carbon monoxide poisoning

- Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless, and toxic gas. Because it is impossible to see, taste, or smell the toxic fumes, CO can kill you before you are aware it is in your home.
- During times of winter storms, carbon monoxide deaths are frequent due to using emergency heating sources during power outages and to running cars that are stuck in snow.

Adapted from resource material developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the National Center for Environmental Health, CDC